

BLM-Utah RecRAC Conf Call/Meeting Minutes

November 25, 2014

9:00 – 11:00

Monument A, Utah State Office

Salt Lake City

RAC members in attendance: Brian Merrill, Frank White, Carl Albrecht, Callee Butcher, Steve Slater, Porter Teegarden, Jim Allison, Steve Burr, Bill Hopkin, John Harja, Cimarron Chacon

RAC members not in attendance: Chad Baker, Rick Ellis, JR Nelson

BLM attendees: Juan Palma, Aaron Curtis, Michael Knight, Sherry Foot, Pat Smith

Members of the public: No members of public in attendance

Agenda topics: The Amended Business Plan for the San Juan River (proposes moving the San Juan River non-commercial boating permit lottery and reservation system to www.recreation.gov to improve customer service and permitting efficiency) and the Draft Business Plan for Recreation Use Permits in the BLM-Richfield Field Office (proposes to modify camping fees at Starr Spring, McMillan Spring, and Lonesome Beaver Campgrounds).

San Juan River (Silas Sparks)

The 2014 amendment to the plan provides the public with details of the proposed move to Recreation.gov and the associated changes to permit business rules.

Proposal: To distribute non-commercial San Juan River SRPs and collect fees through Rec.gov for the 2015 season beginning 12/1/14. Boaters will be able to apply for reservations in the permit lottery, reserve launch dates, makes changes to permits, and make fee payments online 24/7. Commercial SRPs will continue to be administered by the Monticello FO and will not be included.

Benefits to Public: Better customer service; 24/7 access to complete routine transactions; more fair and less frustrating system for obtaining coveted launch cancellations; BLM river office will be more readily available to answer trip planning questions and handle more advanced transactions; and, enhanced personal information security.

Benefits to BLM and Resource: Will significantly reduce amount of staff time spent performing routine transactions and processing the lottery; all river staff to spend more time on other essential river program needs.

Proposed Changes to SRP Business Rules: A \$6 transaction fee would replace the application fee and would be collected per each new transaction; March 15 for all lottery winners or

immediately at the time a non-lottery reservation is made; and, if a permit is cancelled or group size reduced a minimum of 31 days prior to launch date, a full refund would be issued.

Rationale for Change to Transaction Fee: The cost of doing online business and providing the associated customer service; \$6 transaction fee collected on BLM's behalf is the minimum transaction fee charged for all federal sites that Rec.gov provides reservation services for, in order to cover the cost of those services.

Impacts of Change to Transaction Fee: Public – 350 to 400 unsuccessful lottery applicants would have to pay a second \$6 transaction fee to book a reservation after the lottery; 100 boaters would have to pay a \$6 transaction fee for each new reservation; and, impact of change considered negligible when considering total costs of trip. BLM – Will cost Monticello BLM approx. \$19,000-\$20,000 a year to provide online reservation services through Rec.gov; costs will be offset by reduction in permit processing labor funded by river permit fee revenues.

Impacts of Change to Payment Due Dates: Fee payment will be required sooner; proposed refund policy would provide a refund of fees until 31 days in advance of launch; more initial investment, but no additional financial risk by required reservation holders to pay sooner; and, more launch reservations available sooner for unsuccessful lottery applicants to make trip planning more feasible.

Rationale for Change to Refund Policy: Refunds not previously offered because of BLM costs and labor associated with difficult processing; Rec.gov provides simple refund capability at no additional cost to agency; credits cannot be utilized by majority of boaters; and, more incentive for boaters to cancel trips or reduce group size in timely manner.

Impacts of Change to Refund Policy: Public - Will benefit boaters who are unable to apply credit to a trip later in season; added cancellation and group size reduction incentive will create more space for other boaters. BLM – Will have a negligible impact on fee revenues and program financial stability; few reservations are cancelled prior to 31-day deadline; and, timely cancellations re-bookable.

--Monticello requests that the RecRac pass a motion that the move to Rec.gov demonstrates general public support and recommend that the BLM implement the changes to the fee program as proposed immediately

Steve Burr makes motion
Brian Merrill seconded
Voting was unanimous

Recreation Use Permits in Richfield Field Office Fee Proposal (Myron Jeffs)

Presentation will demonstrate that the fee proposals comply with FLREA; documented the need to modify fees; and provided for and considered public comment.

Starr Springs

Current fee \$4 (single); Group \$12

Proposed: \$10 (single): Group \$20

Lonesome Beaver Campground

Current fee \$4 (single)

Proposed: *No minimum fee

McMillan Spring Campground

Current fee \$4 (single)

Proposed: *No minimum fee

*No minimum fee: Visitors pay what they feel their camping experience is worth (trial approach for one year)

Adaptive Management: After one year, the Field Office Manager will decide whether to continue the approach or terminate it.

Desired Condition and Triggers (The decision will be based on the following): Revenue; visitor feedback; visits; expenditures; few impacts. If at any time (after one year) the outcome is not meeting our desired conditions, the fee will be set at \$5 per site per night for Lonesome Beaver and McMillan campgrounds.

--Request RecRAC to pass a motion that the proposal demonstrates general public support and to recommend that the BLM implement the changes to the fee program as proposed.

Implementation of proposals: Spring 2015.

Steve Burr makes motion to approve proposal

Steve Slater seconded

Steve Burr amended motion: That field office would report back to RecRAC after the year's implementation, and request any changes if necessary.

Steve Slater seconded

Voting was unanimous

No future meeting date has been set.

Approved: _____/s/ Carl Albrecht_____
Carl Albrecht, RAC Chairman

Date: _____12/4/14_____